

## Abraham Lincoln papers

From George E. H. Day to Abraham Lincoln, January 1, 1862

St Anthony Minn. Jan 1, 1862.

Mr President

in August last I was appointed Special Commissioner by Mr Dole<sup>1</sup> Comm. Ind. Affairs with the approbation of Hon Mr Smith Sec Interior at the request of Hon J. R. Doolittle<sup>2</sup> Chairman of the Senate Com. Ind Affairs & Hon. C. Aldrich<sup>3</sup> Chairman of House Com. same subject for 100 days only. I visited the Chippewas of the Miss. first— then of Lake Superior — held 3 councils with them — then I visited the Winnebagoes & then the Sioux or Dacotas held 3 more councils travelling all by land (nearly) about 1800 miles in my own wagon driving my mules, often sleeping in the woods & generally without any companions— distance between stopping places from 20 to 60 miles frequently. Everywhere I have been treated by the present officers of Gov with courtesy & have reciprocated all civilities & enclose herewith a copy of a letter of the Hon Mr Galbraith<sup>4</sup> Sioux Agt, for consideration. I have discovered numerous violations of law & many frauds committed by past Agents & a superintendent. I think I can establish frauds to the amount from 20 to 100 thousand dollars & satisfy any reasonable intelligent man that the indians whom I have visited in this state & Wisconsin have been defrauded of more than 100 thousand dollars in or during the four years past. The Superintendent Major Cullen,<sup>5</sup> alone, has saved, as all his friends say more than 100 thousand in four years out of a salary of 2 thousand a year and all the Agents whose salaries are 15 hundred a year have become rich.

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1 William P. Dole

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2 James R. Doolittle

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3 Cyrus Aldrich

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4 Thomas J. Galbraith was agent to the Sioux of Minnesota. See Galbraith to William P. Dole, December 10, 1861.

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5 William J. Cullen was the Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Northern Superintendency during the Buchanan Administration.

The Indians are decreasing in numbers & yet their payments never increase but year after year have also decreased to each person & in the aggregate. The whole system is defective & must be revised or, your red children, as they call themselves, will continue to be wronged & outraged & the just vengeance of heaven continue to be poured out & visited upon this nation for its abuses & cruelty to the Indian. I most sincerely desire to aid Mr Dole & Hon Mr Smith in revising & perfecting the trade & intercourse laws & regulations with the cooperation such honest men as Judge Doolittle & others who desire that the placing of the Government in the hands of an honest man shall result in honest & free & humane dealings & transactions with the poor defrauded & degraded Indians of our frontiers. Here are a few of the words of the head Chief of Lake Superior Chippeways spoken at my Council Oct 22, 1861, last, "We send him our Great Father— our profound respects— We hope his heart is like the Great spirit all benevolence & that he will listen to our requests". At all my councils the Chiefs desire me to make many requests of their Great Father & tell him of many wrongs they had suffered from the Gov Agents and especially Traders the greatest Curse of the Indians and the Curse of the nation for they boast that they can control Congress & have done it Our Senator Rice<sup>6</sup> is an old trader with two living indian wives & he has had, during the past administration, with which he was omnipotent, three old Indian-Traders appointed Agents. I never scarcely heard of an honest indian trader — & then it is understood he is very liberally supported every way by the Traders The whole pack of traders & ex Agents & Superintendent are making war upon me because I have been looking up their frauds & rascalities & because they can neither frighten nor buy me— each of those means having been ineffectually tried.

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<sup>6</sup> Henry M. Rice was a delegate to Congress (1853-57) from the Minnesota Territory and when Minnesota achieved statehood, he served as a Democrat in the Senate (1858-63).

I was at two of your receptions last summer desired to see you alone but knowing how overwhelmed with cares you was, never called. If I were not poor & had not a family to support I would go to Washington at my own Cost out of love of country & the poor indian. I have written to the Secretary of the Interior & Commr Dole & do not wish this referred to them— but desire to be requested to go at Gov expense \$135, would pay all I think as above stated I could save nearly as many thousands. A suggestion to Mr Dole or any Course you choose would accomplish it. The Indian Traders & Agents nearly if not quite controul our delegation in Congress except Mr Windom<sup>7</sup> whom I consider an honest man neither to be bribed nor frightened— sound as a rock I feel to trust a man who fears God I have the honor to be your obt servant

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<sup>7</sup> William Windom



Geo. E. H. Day

Special Commr